

Idaho Trade Token Newsletter

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News

One more time, my computer was plagued by a fault in its hard drive. I could feel it coming on (like a cold) for several weeks, so backups were dutifully made. Micron Electronics shipped me the free replacement and installing it was a snap, but the usual, time-consuming, reloading of software took some valuable hours. Hopefully this third hard drive will be the charm. I don't need to get any farther behind in my correspondence and work on the Idaho catalog. Thanks for your patience to those of you who continue to trust me with parts of your collection!

The 100th Anniversary of the Western Idaho Fair was in 1997. The Idaho Statesman printed a series of 8 sepia tone postcards made from old fair-related photos. I have been able to secure a supply of these Centennial give-aways; if you would like a set, just let me know.

Those were the days...

Arthur Hart, Director Emeritus of the Idaho Historical Society, used to put on a series of four slide shows each Tuesday in March. His narratives combined information he had gleaned from years of research with photos from his travels across Idaho and file photos from the Society to make real crowd-pleasing events. When my daughter became involved with the current race for Idaho Superintendent of Schools, I was reminded of the following story he recounted. It was printed in the Rupert record of May 30, 1907.

CLOSE TO A FALL OVER SHOSHONE

Miss Belle Chamberlain and Companions Have a Narrow Escape from Death

A special to the Statesman from Twin Falls says: Adrift in a disabled ferry boat in the rushing waters of the Snake river, Miss S. Belle Chamberlain, state superintendent of public instruction, and Miss Louise Johnson, state librarian, were snatched from the jaws of death when almost on the brink of Shoshone falls. The women were crossing the river with I. B. Todd of Chicago and H. M. Hebden of Boston when the cable snapped, leaving the boat helpless in midstream. The man in charge of the ferry boat was inexperienced and lost his head and only for the presence of mind of the two men in the party the ferry boat might have gone over the falls, but both Todd and Hebden caught the shore end of the cable before the ferry was away from it and locked it about the beams of the boat. This held the boat fast as the ferry tugged in the switching waters. For fully 30 minutes the party battled with the swift waters of the raging stream. A man on the bank began to slowly pull the ferry to shore and with the assistance of the two men on board the boat was worked to within a short distance of the bank when the two women were put into a skiff and sent to the bank in safety. A short time later the men landed and hauled the ferry to where the team could be unloaded. The party had visited the falls and were crossing the river to visit the Blue Lakes when the accident occurred.

This incident is unrelated to tokens except to serve as an introduction to the following story.

The Heyburn Bridge War

Idaho has always been noted for the barriers nature has erected to impede travel. The mountains, lava beds, rivers, and deserts we enjoy seeing from the air-conditioned comfort of our automobiles were anything but pleasant for those early travelers on foot or horseback. Rivers were particularly difficult to cross, especially during the spring runoff. Ferries were built in numerous places across rivers too large to ford, using the power of the river flow to move the ferry and its passengers back and forth across the stream.

The Snake River in southern Idaho was crossed with ferries at many points; James L. Huntley in his book Ferry Boats in Idaho tells about the Starr's, Story (later Howell's), Montgomery, Downard's, and Starrh's (or Rice) ferries operating across the Snake from the mouth of Raft River to the mouth of Goose Creek. These linked Cassia County on the south to Lincoln County on the north side of the river. As commerce between these two areas grew, there was much agitation to improve the river crossings. The railroad built a branch line from Minidoka across a new bridge at Heyburn and on through Burley to Twin Falls, but there was nothing but the ferries to transport horse-propelled traffic. The 1907 session of the Idaho Legislature passed a bill authorizing the expenditure of \$10,000 to build a bridge below the Montgomery ferry, but Governor Gooding vetoed the bill, dashing the hopes of area residents.

Soon, however, a local entrepreneur named Edwin Verburg determined to raise money for construction of a bridge. He canvassed residents of the area, primarily in Heyburn, and, as noted in the Rupert Record of April 4, 1907, "\$1,200 was subscribed to build the Heyburn bridge, with only \$300 needed" to start construction. Construction indeed started that year, but Verburg had evidently skipped some important details in his bridge-building enthusiasm. The Rupert Record reported the situation in its September 19, 1907 issue.

BRIDGE WAR ON AT HEYBURN

War has recently been declared down at Heyburn over the new toll bridge that was recently built there by Edwin Verberg [sic], assisted by the public spirited people of that section. A battle may be expected at almost any moment, according to reports received from the field.

The people of Heyburn wanted a bridge across the Snake river, and made a great effort to get it from the last legislature. But for the fact that there were so many such bills, all of them with merit, the aggregate being enough to bankrupt the state, they would have had it allowed. Then they built a bridge from their own funds.

The bridge [sic] crosses the river between the towns of Heyburn and Burley and was supposed to have its Cassia county terminus on land homesteaded under the reclamation law by Mr. [Robert] McBride. He had filed on a triangular piece of land between the river and the section line established by the reclamation service as the limit of J. [Josiah] E. Miller's patented land. By contract with McBride, the bridge company was to have the use of a roadway across his land out to the recognized county road. Miller, however, claims that his deed calls for all the land on that side of the river, the river being the boundary line instead of the section line as established and recognized by the reclamation service under which survey McBride has been allowed to homestead the land in question.

Without going into the merits of the claims on both sides, which are to the effect that the other side has been stiff-necked and unwilling to do a square business, it

ended in Miller fencing across the road, which has been travelled for several weeks, and forbidding anyone to cross his land. A guard with a formidable shotgun was stationed there the first of the week, while Miller handles the background with a weapon calibrated to do business at a much longer range. The journal gives these sentiments from the testimony of an eye witness.

The people of the Heyburn side are alive to what might be done is evident from the report that they may get together and give the shotgun artist and his more distant supporter a few volleys of hot lead, which if it does not legally clear the road, will at least show their good intentions.

The Heyburn people claim that the entire bridge movement has been blackened in the interest of forcing the use of a ferry or another bridge and thus sending the Cassia county trade to Burley. Incidentally it might be mentioned that Miller owns the only ferry in the vicinity, and also is interested in Burley more than any other one. Miller on his part claims that the establishing of the road cuts off some of his land, the triangular strip held by McBride as a homestead, and divides his farm in a very objectionable way. He claims that the original plat allows him all the land down to the river; the later survey by the reclamation service and which would be supposed to conform to the surveys already made and on which patents were issued, gives the land to McBride. There should be a very short way of determining the matter, by a comparison of the two surveys, or by an adjustment by the government if they do not correspond, but this has not yet been taken. - Shoshone Journal.

The Rupert Record had quoted this article from the Shoshone Journal; the Burley Bulletin quickly challenged the Record on the story, resulting in the following retraction on October 3.

HOT AIR FROM "PROFESSOR"

'The Bulletin cannot understand how Editor Abbott of the Rupert Record could have published a column of rot from the Shoshone Journal about the "shot-gun" policy in connection with the Heyburn bridge without making an investigation. Living next door to the reported scene of hostilities there was no excuse for the Record in publishing such a hot air story. There was no truth whatever in the report - the whole thing being an attempt of the tail end man on the Journal to belittle the citizens of Burley.' - Burley Bulletin.

Brother, we offer our most humble apology. We did not mean any offense, but judging the journal by the same high standard maintained by the Bulletin and Record, supposed it was perfectly truthful. Hereafter, however, we promise to be more careful, and no more will we offend against the "law of investigation" before publication. And of course that shuts out the following article, taken from the Bulletin, for we have not had time to investigate the truthfulness of it. Sorry we cannot publish it; but the Bulletin says:

'The controversy regarding the proposed road for the Heyburn bridge, recently opened along the east side of section 21, township 10 south, range 23 east, will now be settled in the courts. Attorney George Harriot, in behalf of J. E. Miller and the tax-payers of Cassia county, went before Judge E. A. Walters at Shoshone last Wednesday and secured a temporary injunction against Edwin Verberg and his

associates restraining them from using the road which they recently opened across property alleged to belong to J. E. Miller.

The fences removed by the bridge people were replaced yesterday and notices posted to the effect that the road had been closed by order of the court.

The matter will come up for hearing before Judge Walters in chambers at Shoshone on October 2."

At this point my research has stopped. It is known that Verburg prevailed in the subsequent hearings and was able to operate his toll bridge; his bond was approved by the Lincoln County Commission on October 25, 1907. The "rest of the story" is colorfully told by Burley area local historian Lew Sweetser in this article in the Burley Bulletin of February 16, 1928.

NEW STRUCTURE REPLACES OLD VERBURG BRIDGE ACROSS SNAKE

One dull, gray day in the winter of 1907 a sullen, muttering mass of floating ice, which had been parted by a narrow island reef of polished gravel, swirled together again with an ominous rumble below the gravel reef and sped on down the channel of the Snake river.

An ominous rumble indeed, to the lone man who stood below the gravel islet on a frail wooden bridge right in the path of the oncoming floating mass of menace and destruction. A floating mass of power and force and energy whose resistless onslaught it would seem impossible that any man-made structure could withstand.

In fact, its terrific force had threatened the resisting power of the great Milner dam, some miles below, and the Milner gates had been opened wide to draw off the surplus water and protect the dam. And as the waters of the Snake gave way to seek a lower level, the ice mantle on its surface cracked and snarled and growled, and crushed and crashed together as though in fury at its disturber.

The lone man who stood on the bridge held in his hands a long pike-pole. He prodded hopelessly at the great sharp cakes of ice as they swirled spitefully against the piles of the swaying bridge beneath him. He might as well have tried to stop a swarm of locusts with a wooden toothpick. The ice swirled on, and through, heartlessly sawing at the piling, while the bridge swayed and shivered and trembled like reeds in a swift tide.

The man prodded with his pike-pole for a while, and then he quit. The ice, though, swirled on, still spitefully sawing and battering at the thin piles. And after a time the man returned with help letting down a swinging scaffold, and took angel irons and bound the square corners of the piles. And presently, in a day or two, the river got quite low, and the floating ice no longer threatened the frail structure with destruction.

The Verburg bridge had narrowly escaped a stern catastrophe. For this was the Verburg bridge. And the man who had striven to stop the flood of floating ice, and had later cased the piles in iron armor, was Edwin Verburg, the architect and builder of this bridge.

Verburg was one of those strange geniuses who undertake performances whose completion always leads them into trouble and vexation. He had conceived a plan to span the river with a toll bridge, and at once plunged forward to the task with unbridled energy. Up at the Minidoka dam, recently completed, the great timbers of the cable towers and a lot of beams and ties were offered by the government for sale. Verburg bought them. He rafted these timbers down to a site picked out for his bridge, fashioned a crude over-pull pile driver, and started on his task.

He had troubles from the first. He ran short of funds, went into debt, struggled along without much help. Wrangled with the government for permission to build a bridge across a so-called navigable stream. And finally, when he had built his bridge and reached the Cassia county shore, ran smack up against a two-year legal fight to get a landing place. He was refused a right-of-way to get on and off his bridge in Cassia county. He had his bridge, but no road to reach it.

At length, after battering through a series of adversities that would have shattered the spirit of any ordinary man, our bridge builder won out and enjoyed a brief respite for collecting hard earned tolls. But his triumph was not long to endure. The state built a great iron wagon bridge a mile below his own, which was free to all who might choose to drive across. An iron bridge, this was, right at the site of an old ferry boat whose career had been brought to an end by the building of the Verburg bridge.

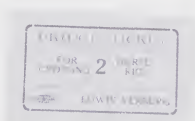
Verburg was beaten. His mortgaged bridge was taken over by the state, its stubborn builder faded from the scene and his name passed into forgetfulness.

The Verburg bridge, now thrown open to free traffic as a state bridge finally became known as the Heyburn bridge. It withstood the onslaughts of winter's ice and the high waters of summer for many years, for in truth it turned out to be a staunchly built affair. But finally, many of its piles were bitten completely through, and the narrow runway built for the crossing of a single wagon at a time, hung precariously above the stream. The structure had become unsafe, and was condemned.

And today, the old landmark, long known by every original settler on the Minidoka tract, has gone the way of the little cable ferry boat which once had plied above it and whose doom one time it sealed. A second time its beams and ties have served as useful purpose and the timbers of the old historic bridge, dismantled, again are gathered into piles, like junk.

And like the Phoenix from its ashes a fine new structure has arisen in its place.

This was written on the occasion of the opening of the new state highway bridge at Heyburn.



The 33x56mm "token" from the Verburg bridge is probable one of several denominations. The 2 horse rig piece has black printing on pale yellow cardboard. I have understood, but cannot find the reference, that his tariff allowed him to charge toll for horsedrawn conveyances only, and part of his downfall was that he had to let automobiles cross his bridge for free as there was not a rate fixed for them.

Burley City Council Action

Lest we think that the pool halls of Burley got off easy after the petition for their closure was denied, as reported in the last issue, take note of the following from the Burley Herald of February 4, 1926.

PASTIME POOL HALL CLOSED BY ORDER OF COUNCIL

The mayor and four aldermen met in regular session Monday evening. The matter of the Pastime pool hall, next to the Burley theatre, was taken up. A resolution was passed that it is declared a public nuisance and that it be closed. The chief of police was ordered to see that the rooming apartment and the pool tables be closed, but the restaurant was allowed to stay in business.



The only token known to me from this business is #BU-22, PASTIME. / BURLEY, IDAHO. // GOOD FOR 5¢ IN TRADE, 21mm ni rd[ch]. In that the "Pastime" is one of the very common names for pool halls, it is entirely possible that there were several different ones operating at different times and locations in Burley. This newspaper article is the only item I have seen dating this business.

Best regards,

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